sfaa NEWSLETTER JUNE 1960

ARTIST MEMBER NOTES AND NEWS

Richard Diebenkorn is exhibiting at the Stanford Art Gallery in Palo Alto through June 26.

Two members were awarded prizes in the current Kingsley Art Exhibit being held at Crocker Art Gallery in Sacramento: **Ralph Johnson,** 1st prize in oil painting and **Lida M. Giambastiani,** 1st prize in graphic arts. **Darwin Musselman** was one of the jurors of acceptance and awards for the exhibit.

Paintings and drawings by **Elizabeth Quandt** and lithographs and etchings by **Dennis Beall** were recently shown at the Drake Gallery in Carmel.

Works by **Nancy Bowers, Ellwood Graham, Art Grant, Charles Safford, Louis** and **Lundy Siegriest** are being shown throughout the summer at the Frederic Hobbs Gallery in San Francisco.

Manuel Neri is exhibiting at the Dilexi Gallery in San Francisco from June 20 through July 16.

Rolf Eiselin has a painting shown at the Marin County Fair annual juried art exhibit.

Lundy Siegriest has a one-man show through July 8 at the Bolles Gallery.

The Long Beach Museum recently gave a one-man show of works by **Hilda Levy.**

Nick Vaccaro and **Joel Smith** recently exhibited at the Valley House Gallery in Dallas, Texas.

Seymour Locks and **William Wiley** will have a two-man show at the San Francisco Museum from July 20 through August 21.

Mark Luca is conducting a course on "Understanding Art As A Visual Language" as part of a University of California Extension class given at the S.F. Museum.

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in Alabama purchased "Mitchell Corn Palace - 1905" by **Syd Fossum** from a traveling show of 26 of his serigraphs. The show will wind up in July at the Joselyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska.

Evelyn Kane is represented in the oil painting exhibit of the California Watercolor Society at the Santa Barbara Museum. The painting is one of twenty selected for the traveling show circulated by the Western Association of Art Museum Directors.

Felicia Kaner was invited to show at the Santa Monica Art Gallery in an exhibit "The Distaff Side" this month. She also is exhibiting several drawings in the California Watercolor Society's Biennial and has had a drawing chosen for the Western Association of Art Museum Directors' traveling show.

Helen Steinau recently had a show of her students' works in her studio. Thirty paintings were displayed including work by pupils ranging in age from 11 to 14 years old.

The Diablo Pageant of Arts exhibited works last month by the following members: **Charles Farr, Felicia Kaner, Karl Kasten, Reed McIntyre, John McLaughlin, Mel Ramos, Robert Sterling, Anne Van Kleeck, Glenn Wessels, Burdette Morton** (honorable mention, oil painting), **Margaret d'Hamer,** (honorable mention, photography).

REPORT TO THE ARTIST MEMBERS

In the beginning of the last fiscal year the Council formed an Executive Committee consisting of the Council Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, the Secretary, the Treasurer and one Council member, to act in cases of emergency between regular Council meetings.

One of the major projects of the Council is to organize the San Francisco Art Association annuals. This last year they were divided into two categories:

(1) Oil and sculpture and opaque watercolor
(2) Drawing, Print and Transparent watercolor.

The oil and sculpture show had a one-man out of town juror. The drawing and print had a local three-man elected jury.

The Association participated in the 1959 Art Festival by having a small select show of some of its prize-winners from the annual of the year before.

This past year's Council also revised certain sections of the by-laws thereby making it possible to process artist membership applications by the Council only. In the past it was necessary that they have Board approval as well. The chairman of the Council was made an ex-officio member of the Board. The Council is now able to enlist the aid of a professional recorder for its meetings.

The fund-raising event of the year was the Fine Arts Auction, done with the assistance of the Women's Auxiliary. The sum of $3,370 was raised.

The artist membership increased by 33 new members.

The Art Bank participation by the members has greatly increased. The Bank reports a very active interest by the community and a list of notable art personalities as visitors. A number of traveling shows have been organized and sent all over the country.

The Members' Show was held at the De Young Museum.

The oil and sculpture annual was held as usual at the San Francisco Museum of Art. Both this exhibit and the members' show have greatly increased in the number of works submitted — almost beyond the facilities of the museums for handling them.

Our **Newsletter** has been improved by the addition of contributing writers and a more regular mailing.

A Collectors' Seminar was organized by the Program Committee of the Board and was assisted by a committee from the Council. This seminar was set up for the general membership.

The near future of the Art Association holds many unsolved problems that will need all the attention of the Council and the artist members. What will we do when our annuals get so big that they cannot be handled by present facilities? How will we give our members a show if there is no museum which can maintain it? How shall we keep our Art Bank going when the Rockefeller grant runs out? What ways can we improve our organization by doing more for the membership? All of these and more are the continued work of the Council.

At the close of the year this Council was still in the process of developing new ideas for improving the artist facilities in the Art Association. The Council hopes that artist members will realize the importance of an all out participation in the Association activities and events. Only through cooperation of an interested membership can the Council achieve the most benefits for the largest number of artists.

David Kasmire, Chairman
Artists' Council

Deadline for member activities, articles, commentaries is the 15th of every month. Please mail all material for the Newsletter to Lou Schultz, San Francisco Art Association, 800 Chestnut Street, San Francisco.

UNTEACHERS AND THE UNTEACHABLE

by Carl Hertel

"Art cannot be taught" is a phrase I have heard uttered by innumerable artists and numerous teachers. It comes strongly to mind each year when I visit student shows at three local colleges, looking, I suppose, at the results of a year of unteaching the unteachable. Since all of these shows are different however, we may assume that unteachers, like teachers and unteaching like teaching, have at least some effect on the student attempting to learn something about the visual arts.

At Pomona College, the student exhibition features two (we may assume best) students, both painters, who work in the abstract expressionist style of instructor Richards Rueben. The work of these two students is youthful (strangely enough), vigorous and at a glance exciting, although it cannot sustain this excitement. What one wonders is if these young people are getting what students can expect of art training. That is, a foundation from which artistically valid and individual modes of expression can arise. I think not. Action painting seemingly substitutes "experiencing" for the learning of respect for and use of tools and materials in the visual arts. There is obviously an experential element in art if in no other way than in Ortega's taking the work of art as a "window" which from my point of view, we look out of at experience in one form or other no matter what the approach. If you will maintain that the window in this sense is the experience I can only say that this represents an unfortunately narrow world-view and that classes in such could be more accurately called "Experience 1-A" instead of "Drawing and Painting 1-A": the former being a course topic as ludicrous as the painting which is supposed to be an end unto itself.

A few blocks north of Pomona is Scripps College with its humanities program aimed at providing students with a taste of everything delicious in the humanities, including, of course, art. The Scripps show is delicious in a way, being filled with visual delights. While the show is dominated by the decorative experimentism of the ceramicists, the most impressive work is the sculpture done under unteacher Albert Stewart. Stewart is a teacher in unteacher disguise as his students grapple with fundamental problems of the visual arts in terms of form and materials discovered and mastered. The results carry more message than the Pomona paintings and greater visual impact than the other Scripps work. Stewart can teach because as something of a classicist, he accepts (and has the advantage of) definite limitations. The foundation from which his students may ascend (if they are strong enough to shake off the obvious influences) is made of sturdy stuff.

At Mount San Antonio College we come to grips with the "public" in education. The students in art at this community college are much less sophisticated than their Claremont counterparts and the frequent naivite of their work is refreshing. Walter Mix provides his diamonds in the rough with a limited architectonic approach to subject and composition which produces a surprising variety of simple, but highly individual efforts.

All things considered, the unteachers seem to be teaching something (it ain't art) and from this, younger artists are emerging. My bet is that those who know and respect their tools and materials will have a better chance than those who learned solely by "experiencing it". A few of the former will last (I do not pretend to know what kind of work they will be producing), while all of the latter rather than being the end of art will be ends unto themselves, alas.

(Editor's Note: The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Art Association)

SOCIETY: MORAL OR IMMORAL?

by David Simpson

Oscar Wilde was once supposed to have said that where you have beauty, you can have no message. Ever since then, the idea of art with a message has been a dirty thought to a great many people.

Even today, eighty years after the word "normal" was turned into a washed-out quasi-Christian form of expressing self-righteousness, critics still avoid thinking of art as possibly being "right or wrong".

In the latest issue of the "College Art Journal", William R. Herman writes, in an otherwise excellent essay: "... Whether the artist himself rejects himself from the world or the world rejects him because of his attachment of importance to himself is of no concern to this study; nor is it important here to inquire if this is a **bad** state of affairs ...".

It seems to me this question, dealing with whether it is good that the artist is alienated from society, **is** an important one.

Whenever we speak of a "good" or "bad" state of affairs, we are speaking in terms of right and wrong, and are therefore discussing a morality, or a "message". Mr. Herman avoids raising the issue of right or wrong, possible for the same reason most of us do. When a philosophy of relativism is predominent and when Christianity is so weak an instrument in our spiritual lives, when psychology seeks out mitigating circumstances for committing acts we once considered wrong, we feel we are hardly qualified to judge.

But are we really unqualified to make such judgments?

Assume for a moment it is **absolutely** wrong. to steal. If it is the act itself that is absolutely wrong, then it matters little if a theft involves a few pennies or thousands of dollars - since money has no intrinsic **moral** value in itself - and it is the **act** of stealing which constitutes the wrong. Society, through its system of justice, may find extenuating circumstances which seem to "force" someone to steal. Usually these circumstances are interpreted so as to somehow justify the act, and cancel out the wrongness of it. So - a jury may extend mercy to a mother who steals to feed her starving children. In extending mercy, are we really in any way able to excuse the moral wrong? No - since there are no exceptions to a morality which is absolute and therefore inflexible. Mercy then, is simply a means of lessening the **punishment** society exacts, rather than saying in effect "in this case it was all right to steal".

Now, assume that it is an absolute wrong to kill people. If it so then it is so for no matter what reason, and no matter how many are killed, since it is the **act** which is wrong, as in the case of stealing. So - if it is absolutely wrong to kill people, it matters little if the act is committed by a criminal, by society through the medium of war, or by society through the medium of its laws. If it is an absolute moral wrong to kill, then our laws condoning it are immoral. A body of law, just as an amount of money, has no intrinsic moral value of its own, but must be based on a moral value external to itself if it is to be morally right. This of course represents the moral issue which Chessmans' plight brought into focus. Rather than change a law, which is in itself not moral, we choose to make the law inflexible, and the moral wrong of killing (if it is absolute) inflexible, thereby confusing right and wrong. It's significant I think, that all the arguments against the repeal of capital punishment, deal in terms of method (how to handle prisoners, the expense, etc.) and not morals. Certainly if we believed intensly that it is a moral wrong to kill people, we would be willing to spare the cost of reversing the ratio of guards to prisoners, if this is what it would take to prevent killing within prison walls. A great number of further examples could be argued here, but let us go on.

Since laws are not in themselves right or wrong, what are they? Many laws simply express what society condones, and are not based on anything, other than a majority belief — which obviously isn't per-se, moral. As long as we confuse laws with morality, we won't know the difference between right and wrong - or, we in effect place an absolute value on what society believes, whether right or wrong - simply because that is what society wants. Thus we have what has been called the tryanny of the majority, which invests in society a mistaken quality of right.

So far we have simply assumed it is wrong to kill people. Let me now argue that we needn't simply assume it - that **it is absolutely wrong to kill.**

A morality deals with right and wrong, as external and beyond the individual person. and yet morality is only expressed through the medium of human behavior. That is, our understanding of right and wrong is what determines our behavior. Needless to say, if the wrong exists now, it always did, if it is really absolute. Also it is obvious that people killing people has been going on since the beginning of people. But - it is only in our own age that society, through the institutions it allows to express its beliefs, has acquired the energy to destroy itself - totally and irrevocably. Society, in condoning killing through its laws, in effect condones the idea of man killing man - and places its approval on an act which can end its own existence, through war. If society approves killing men, it condones the very agent of its own destruction.

And since a morality is expressed in terms of human behavior, if man condones exterminating himself, it is obvious that **it is absolutely wrong to kill people, the only medium for the morality itself.**

Even if it was **right** to kill people, we can no longer afford to do so, when in so doing we condemn the human race to death.

To get back to whether it is good that the artist is alienated from society; it is obvious, that since society is immoral, and if the artist desires to maintain his morality, he must do nothing that affirms societys' sense that it is in itself right - he must in effect reject society. I don't mean to imply that the artist should or does pose as a savior, puffs himself up with righteousness, or that his art has any more intrinsic moral value than money or laws. I mean simply that there can be seen a moral basis, which is good, for the behavior of the artist, when he rejects society.

(Editor's Note: The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Art Association.)

NEW MEMBERS

Participating: **Mr. and Mrs. Edward T. Haas, Mrs. Thomas Wiper.**

Artist: **Elaine Adrienne Gates, James Lee Hansen, William Kohn, Merle Peek, Vic Smith.**

Harold Zellerbach, member of the S.F.A.A. Board of Directors, recently purchased works by the following artist members: "Exodus" by **Deborah Remington;** "Betegeuse", **Art Holman;** "Red Stripe", **David Simpson;** "January 30, 1960", **Horst Trave;** "Arena #9", **Robert McChesney;** "Untitled", **John Saccaro;** "The Bird Song", **Bethel de Boie;** "Temple and Jungle Birds", **Lundy Siegriest;** "Waterfront", **Fenton Kastner;** "Yellow Light", **Jason Schoener;** "Red Bank", **Alexander Nepote;** "Oakland View", **Hildegarde Haas;** "Number 3", **Byron McClintock.**

C.S.F.A.

The college's summer session begins July 11. **Stanley Hayter,** world famous artist will conduct two courses, one in painting and one in advanced print-making. Another unique course this summer will be "Advertising Design for Television", taught by **John Norall.** Other courses will be offered in drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, graphics and photography. Registration dates are July 5, 6 and 7. Art Association members are entitled to a ten percent discount on tuitions.

The San Francisco Museum is featuring a one-man show by **Stanley Hayter** through July 17.

Jose Lerma and **Howard Foote,** former students will be exhibiting at the Frederic Hobbs Gallery, San Francisco, during the summer.

William Wiley was awarded the Robert Howe Fletcher Cup for outstanding students last month at commencement. **Mr. Wiley** received a B.F.A. degree with highest honors.

ARTISTS' COUNCIL

The Artist Members' Annual Meeting was held at the California School of Fine Arts, June 10. **David Kasmire** read the annual report which is printed in this Newsletter, and ballots were counted for Council and Board electees. The following members were elected to the Board of Directors: **Ruth Armer, Katherine Barieau** and **Glen Wessels.** New Council members are **Sonya Rapoport, John Saccaro, Nell Sinton, Boyd Allen, Tony DeLap, Joel Barletta, Julius Wasserstein, William McIntyre, Gertrude Murphy, Dennis Beall** and **John Ihle.**

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